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OPENING ADDRESS
BEFORE THE INTER-
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FOR THE AMENDMENT
OF ENGLISH ORTHO-
GRAPHY

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PROF. MARCH'S ADDRESS

—BEFORE THE—

International Convention

FOR THE AMENDMENT OF

ENGLISH ORTHOGRAPHY.

PHILADELPHIA, AUGUST 15, 1870.



B. Q. BAKER
LAWYER
PHILADELPHIA

THE OPENING ADDRESS

—BEFORE—

THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

FOR THE AMENDMENT OF

English Orthography,

AT PHILADELPHIA, AUGUST 15th, 1876.

—BY—

PROF. FRANCIS A. MARCH,

OF LAFAYETTE COLLEGE, EASTON, PA.

NOTE.

I^N this address a is printed for a when it sounds as in *fast, far*. a for a as in *face*. i for i as in *fine*, o for o as in *not, nor*, u for u as in *but, burn*. u for u as in *music, use*, and, beginning on page 11, g for g as in *general*, and z for s, as in *is*.

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1938
B. O. BAKER
LAWYER
DALLAS, TEXAS

THE OPENING ADDRESS
BEFORE
THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION,
FOR
THE AMENDMENT OF ENGLISH ORTHOGRAPHY.

Scholars spend a great part of their time studying old books and monuments. They are apt to think of writing as a record merely. But it is really mighty machinery working for the future, the agent by which each generation is introduced to knowledge and culture. Philology prides herself on her conquest of the past, her reconstruction of history; but she should aim at the higher praise of earnest work for the future, of contributions to the progress of the race. The improvement of the reading machinery of the English language, the reform of English spelling is a great work. It is doubtful whether the welfare of the race is as much promoted by any invention of the century, whether the steam engine or the telegraph contributes as much to the progress of the people, as would the invention and introduction of a good phonetic system of spelling our language. The difference between a family who can read and one who can not, is vastly more important than the difference between a family that uses railroads and telegraphs and one that does not.

EVILS OF BAD SPELLING.

Our wretched spelling hinders our people from becoming readers in two ways, by the length of time which it takes to learn it, and by the dislike of reading which it induces. Three years are spent in our primary schools in learning to read and spell a little. The German advances as far in a twelvemonth. A large fraction of the school time of the millions is thus stolen from useful studies, and devoted to the most painful drudgery. Millions of years are thus lost in every generation. Then it affects the intellect of beginners. The child should have its reason awakened by order, proportion, fitness, law in the objects it is made to study. But wo to the child who attempts to use reason in spelling English. It is a mark of promise not to spell easily. One whose reason is active must learn not to use it. The whole process is stupefying and perverting; it makes great numbers of children

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finally and forever hate the sight of a book and reluct from all learning. There are reported to the takers of our last census 5,500,000 illiterates in the United States. One half at least of those who report themselves able to read, cannot read well enough to get much good from it. It may be held certain that good spelling would increase by millions the number of easy readers, and by millions more the number of those fond of knowledge. But moral degeneracy follows the want of cultivated intelligence. Christianity can not put forth half her strength where she can not use her presses. Republics fall to ruin when the people become blind and bad. We ought then to try to improve our spelling from patriotic and philanthropic motives. If these do not move us, it may be worth while to remember that it has been computed that we throw away \$15,000,000 a year paying teachers for adding the brains of our children with bad spelling, and at least \$100,000,000 more, paying printers and publishers for sprinkling our books and papers with silent letters.

ORTHOGRAPHY NOT ORTHOEPY.

We are met to reform orthography, not orthoepy; we have to do with writing, not pronunciation. There are all sorts of English people, and words are pronounced in all sorts of ways. It is the work of the orthoepist to observe all these different ways, and to decide which is the prevailing pronunciation of the most cultured, to decide which is the standard English pronunciation. The orthographer tells how to represent this pronunciation in writing. The orthoepist has many nice and difficult questions to solve. We enter into his labors. We take for granted that there is a standard pronunciation of English. We wish to see it represented by simple and reasonable alphabetic signs.

AN IDEAL ALPHABET.

The essential idea of an alphabet is that each elementary sound have its own unvarying sign, and each sign its own unvarying sound. But in a perfect alphabet the characters should be easy to write and to distinguish, and shapely; similar sounds should have similar signs, and similar series of sounds should have series of signs with similar analogies of form; each character should be so shaped as to easily suggest something about the position of the organs of speech in making it; and all nations should use the same characters with similar values. Moreover, derived alphabets, being necessarily bearers of history, should be esteemed better as they incidentally embody more important history. The perfect alphabet will not press any of these incidental qualities so far as to interfere with the essential purpose of an alphabet, the easy communication of thought by signs of sound. Standard alphabets for popular use should have signs only for well established

significant sounds. The vowel sounds shade into each other like colors. The consonants are made in many ways. Mr. Ellis had signs for some 300 letters, years ago. Thousands may be distinguished, and need to be, for the purposes of comparative phonology. No minuteness comes amiss to science. Different nations make different qualities of sound significant. Tones make letters for the Chinese. Length was a great matter with the early Indo-Europeans, in the Sanskrit and Greek, and the like. We have come to use stress for the old pitch, and neglect the measure of time; we make letters only on the ground of quality. Many tribes make nothing of the difference between surd and sonant: *p* and *b* are all one to them: both are made with the lips, they say. We can not be sure that any difference is so slight that no nation has exalted, or may exalt it to significance. But the general standard of a great nation must always be severely simple. It is wholly undesirable to admit in it the ever varying glides and finishes and coloring of fashionable or vulgar articulation, or even the more stable and general colorings produced by adjacent letters, as long as they are without significance. The perfect alphabet will not record etymology and history to the neglect of current sounds.

THE REAL ALPHABET.

No language has a perfect alphabet. Alphabetic writing was not invented to answer to an ideal; it is a sort of growth, or development by natural selection, from picture writing, and like other things that grow in minds without ideas, it needs making over for the use of man. Moreover, living speech is always changing, the spoken language always running away from the written.

CHANGES IN SPOKEN LANGUAGE.

Two classes of changes may be distinguished. One of single words. The letters of unaccented syllables are carelessly pronounced, and often drop out, and bring together letters which are hard to pronounce together, so that one weakens, is assimilated, or silent. Carolina tends to become Carolina, and then Colina and Coliny and Cliny. In most languages the written words rapidly adapt themselves to these changes. As soon as scholars all stop sounding a letter in any word, they stop writing it. Such changes as affect one word at a time must go on slowly, and the written and spoken speech are not drawn far apart. The other is a general change in some elementary sound. It gets to be the fashion to utter some sound in a slightly different way from the old standard: a vowel is made closer than it used to be, or is made with a finish: every body gets to saying a for a (past for past) or iu for u (tune for tune) or ai for a (faite for fate.)

The change goes on until the old letter is merged in sound into some other old letter or letters, or till a new letter is established as significant. Changes of this class often go far without affecting the written speech. The Greek affords many familiar examples. Several sets of such changes are of interest in English.

1. The regular assimilation of letters connected in discourse, by which intermediate letters spring up between the old ones. Between *a* (*far*) and *e* (*met*) *a* as in *fat*, *fare*, has now become established: between *a* (*far*) and *o* (*no*), *o* as in *not* and *nor*; then there are the neutral vowels of *fun* and *burn*. Mute consonants under vowel influence change to continuous or spirant consonants, as *ti* to *sh* in *notion*; and surds change to sonants, as *si* to *zh* in *pleasure*. Six vowels and four consonants unknown to the early Romans have arisen in this way.

2. Another class of changes is connected with the accent. The close vowels *i* and *u* lengthen into diphthongs by taking before them the sound of *a* (*far*). The long *i* (*ai*), as in *mine*, was at first pronounced as in *machine*: the *ou* (*au*), as in *house* (Anglo-Saxon *hus*), was spelt and pronounced like *u* in *rude*. The open and mixed vowels have become closer, *a* (*far*) going to *e* (*fate*) or *o* (*wall*), *e* (*they*) going to *i* (*machine*, *me*), *o* going to *u* (*rule*, *moon*). It has thus come about that single characters stand for diphthongs, and that the short and long sounds which go in pairs in other languages are denoted by different characters in ours, and are derived from different sources.

3. These pairs, not having been associated together, have not grown so much alike as in other languages: the *e* of *met* is different in quality from its long as heard in *may*, the *i* of *fit* from its long as heard in *fee*; so that it is doubtful whether one character will do for both, whether we must not have different characters for each short and long, after the manner of old time-observing tongues.

THE ANGLO-SAXON ALPHABET.

Our grandmother tongue, the Anglo-Saxon, had a pretty good alphabet. There was early writing in runes, but the Roman missionaries, who converted the nation, reduced the language to writing in Roman letters. They gave them the power which they then had in Latin, using *c* always like *k*, and *g* as in *go*. For sounds which did not occur in Latin they preserved runes, or used digraphs after the manner of the Celts. Runes were used for *th* and *w*. They distinguished *a* in *far* from *a* in *hat*, using *ae*, *w* for the latter. They also distinguished other nice varieties of vowel shading and finish.

THE MODERN ENGLISH.

Our woes spring from the Norman conquest. Anglo-Saxons and Normans united to make the English nation, and they threw their languages into a sort of hotchpotch. Many of the words of each race were hard for the other to pronounce. They were spelt by the scholars to whom they were native, in the old book fashion, but the people did not pronounce them correctly. Many letters were left silent, or inserted to no purpose, in ill-directed attempts to represent the strange combinations. Then the great shifting already described took place in the whole gamut, so to speak, of the vowel sounds. People hardly knew what was the matter as these changes went on, and before our scholars waked up, the whole habit of writing was so far away from a phonetic one, that people ceased to feel any necessity for keeping sounds and signs together, and the scholars gave up. We attained at last a very fair approach to the Chinese ideographic system. The written words are associated with thoughts as wholes, without reference to the sounds which the separate letters might indicate. Changes in the sounds of words go on with no record in the writing. Ingenious etymologists slip in new silent letters as records of history drawn from their imagination. Old monsters, fertile in the popular fancy, propagate themselves in the congenial environment, and altogether we have attained the worst spelling on the planet. And we have been proud of it, and we are fond of it.

WHAT CAN WE DO ?

What can be done for reform. We can produce dissatisfaction with the present spelling. That is easy. We can teach the people what spelling ought to be. That is harder. We can harmonize views as to the changes which are practicable, and the methods of introducing them. And then we can use reformed spelling, and get others to use it.

PREPARATORY WORK.

Much has already been done to prepare the way. Comparative philology is founded on phonetics, and no scholar ever works in this field without lamenting the condition of the English language. Most of our ablest philologists have spoken out about it. Several of the most eminent have published vigorous essays of demonstration, obijuration and appeal. Our venerable chief, the Honorable George P. Marsh, minister of the United States at Rome. Prof. Hadley, the president of the American Philological Association, Whitney, Trumbull, Haldeman, stand side by side with Prof. Max Müller, with presidents of the London Philological Society, with Ellis, with Pitman, Bell and other practical workers, and with all scholars, great and small, of other races.

The growth of the historical study of the English language and literature has also been of great service. It has made it necessary to ascertain the pronunciation of the language at different epochs. The difficulty of this investigation, and the singular facts which are unearthed from old grammars and dictionaries, or made out by induction from the poets, or reasonings from the laws of letter change, surprise every one. The huge volumes in which Mr. Ellis has collected the materials for the study of the history of English pronunciation are impressive witnesses against the spelling in which the facts were buried. The publications of the Early English Text Society, which reproduce the spelling of the original manuscripts, similar publications of the Chaucer Society, reprints of the first folio of Shakespeare and of the early editions of Spenser, make every one familiar with many ways of spelling, and so make it easy to read in any spelling. We get used to seeing the same word spelt half a dozen ways on the same page, and are not easily startled by the most ingenious modern professor of phonetics. Modern writers in dialect like Burns and Scott, and the comic caricaturists of fashionable or vulgar slang, Dickens, Nasby, Josh Billings, all help. We make the wisest guesses at the sound, which they mean to indicate, we read our Burns in Scottish which no Scot ever dreamed of, but at least they set us free from the common spelling. Our common-school teachers have been powerful aids in producing dissatisfaction with the old spelling, especially in those parts of the country where there are German children in the schools. German parents cannot be made to understand why their children are kept in spelling books four or five years, and they complain bitterly about it. Our Superintendents, always alert and ready for improvements of every kind, have been long in earnest to find some mode of escape from the spelling plague. Teachers of Latin and Greek, and of French, German and other modern languages help. Teachers of elocution also teach systems of vocal sounds, which are passed along to teachers in the common-schools and kindergartens who train the children in reading. Many of our school primers and readers do good work by trying to introduce children to our present written language through a phonetic system. Dr. Leigh's books of this kind are used in many of our cities from New York to St. Louis, if not to San Francisco, as they might well be. Many persons learn phonetic stenography. There are a large number of teachers of it and periodicals published in its interest. Mr. Pitman's Phonetic Journal has a circulation of ten thousand copies.

Most persons forty or fifty years old would be astonished to learn how extensive is the preparation for a change of spelling already made in the younger generation. Add foreigners and other persons who read imperfectly and do not know but Josh Billings spells as well

as any body, a great host, and it would seem that three fourths of the persons in America who are counted in our census as able to read, could read with little new embarrassment a reformed spelling having no unknown characters, while the 5,500,000 illiterates might be taught it in half the time of the old one.

SCHEMES OF REFORM.

The remedy for single words which have old silent letters standing, or blundering spelling of their own, is obvious, if not easy. Drop the silent letters. Correct the blunders. It is not easy to apply these obvious directions, because our spelling is so complex that a change can seldom be made without starting into activity some minor analogy which stops the way. Drop the silent *e* of *ripe*, it becomes *rip*. Drop one of the *ts* of *latter*, it becomes *later*. *Grief* has a silent letter. Is it *i* or *e*? The *l* in *could* is a mere blunder under the influence of *should* and *would*; the *o* is a modern insertion. Shall we then write *cu*? Before we can answer we must decide on the scheme of sounds which we will use. All corrections should bring the words nearer to the ideal alphabet. There are a few words in which we can not go wrong. Such are most of those with a silent *e* after a syllable with a short vowel, *give* (*giv*), *live* (*liv*); and of those in which *ea* has the sound of short *e*, *deal* (*ded*), *heal* (*hed*); but in most words we can do nothing to the purpose till we have settled the alphabet which shall be the basis of general reform. The remedy for the general insufficiency and contrariety of our notation is by no means obvious or easy. There are three general methods of cure, each of which has its show of reason and its able advocates.

NEW SIGNS.

The first is the invention and adoption of a new set of alphabetic signs, which shall have forms better suited to rapid and legible writing than the Roman characters, and have scientific analogies with the sounds which they represent. It must be admitted that it is easy to improve upon the Roman alphabet in these respects. Any one who has seen the alphabet of Mr. Pitman's stenography, or that of Bishop Wilkins, or of Mr. Bell, will be at no loss for suggestions. It would be a great thing, certainly, if we could have in English a system adapted to all possibilities of vocal utterance, with scientific simplicity and legibility such as to make it finally the alphabet of the world. For my part, I do not regard it as a wild vision to imagine such an alphabet in the future. But it is obvious that any such system must win its way very slowly, first into co-ordinate use with the Roman alphabet, and after a struggle of many generations, to its displacement: so that the improvement of our present alphabet is still to be desired while it lasts. As to the direction in which we are to

look for the coming conqueror, it may be worth remarking, that it seems not unlikely that printing by hand-machines may take the place of writing to a great extent, and make rapidity quite secondary to legibility. If the press had not been invented, and books, and magazines, and newspapers had to be prepared by penmen for all the readers of the present day, Pitman's stenography, or something like it, would have long since displaced the Roman letters; the hand-machine for printing may open the way for an alphabet like Bell's, of complex signs with large significance.

OUR LETTERS WITH ROMAN VALUES.

The Roman alphabet is so widely and firmly established among the leading civilized nations that it can not be soon displaced. In adapting it to improved use in English, and in supplementing it, two plans may be followed. One is to hold the Roman values of the letters as nearly as they are found in English, and supplement by the invention of new characters, and the use of diacritical marks. This is the system which scholars generally use when they wish to represent in writing the true sounds of English words, and it brings us into accord with other nations. It gives the following alphabet. The letters which have their Roman sound, or nearly that, in familiar use, and so retain it, are *a* (*far*), *e* (*let*), *i* (*pit*), *o* (*note*), *u* (*bull*), *b*, *c* (*k*), *d*, *f*, *g* (*go*), *h*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *p*, *r*, *s* (*so*), *t*. We now distinguish between the vowel and consonant sounds of the Roman *i* and *u*, using *y* and *w* for the consonant sounds; *j* and *v*, old variations of *i* and *u*, were at first used with this power in English, as they still are in many languages, but since the Norman mixture they have acquired other sounds, and *y* and *w* are too firmly established to be easily shaken. We have also come to distinguish the surd from the sonant utterance of *s*, the sonant now being denoted by *z*, or a reversed *s*, so that we must add to the Roman consonants, *v*, *w*, *y*, *z*, (*z*). There are three new short vowels which need signs, those in *fat*, *not*, *but*. For these the signs most easy to introduce are easily recognized variations of *a*, *o*, *u*, such as, for example, *ä*, *ö*, *ü*. It has been heretofore found best in languages written in Roman letters to use the same sign for a short vowel and its long, adding a diacritical mark where great precision is needed. This course would probably be acceptable in English with the sounds of *a* (past far), *ä* (fat fare), *o* (obey note), *u* (bull rude), *ö* (not nor), *ü* (but, burn). There is doubt about *e* (let late) and *i* (pick pique); variations of *e*, looking like *a* or *ä*, such as, for example, *ä*, and of *i* looking like *e*, *e* have good promise. For diphthongs there are *ai* (by), *au* (house), *oi* (noise, in music.) It seems to be necessary almost for us to use at first for *ai* some variation of *i*, such as, for example, *ï*; and for *iu* some variation of *u*, such as, for example, *ü*. Nor is the permanent

use of a simple character for these glides to be deplored, if polite pronunciation is to be represented. Finally there are the consonants th, dh, (thin thine), sh, zh, (sugar pleasure), ng (sing), and the combinations tsh (church), dzh (judge), which await their signs in the perfect alphabet. The surd and sonant th had their simple signs in Anglo-Saxon, which scholars would like to revive. The old long *s* has been used a good deal for *sh* by scholars in Germany. The italic *gg* offers a good transition form for *g*, when it has the sound of *dzh*; and many other characters have been suggested for all these sounds by our modern inventors, none of them quite satisfactory, or giving promise of easy introduction. But we need not fear. The digraphs with *h* are not so very bad, and the single signs will be forthcoming in due time.

In behalf of this system it may be said, that it will be easiest to read for all who read French, German, Latin, Greek, or Anglo-Saxon, and will have all learned associations in its favor. It will be easiest for children and the illiterate to learn. It will make the learning of foreign tongues easy. It will settle the school pronunciation of Latin and Greek. We shall pronounce, of course, as the Romans did; for that will be our natural reading of the letters. No one will think of studying up a pronunciation so remote and difficult as our English method will then become, or of making a *lingua Franca* of good old Latin, after the manner of the so-called continental method. It will revive the speech of our classic old English authors. As we now read Hamlet and the Canterbury Tales, Shakespeare would understand them with difficulty, Chaucer hardly at all. Chaucer tells us what pains he took with his spelling:

“So oft aday I mot thy werke renewe,
It to correct, and eke to rubbe and scrape.”

He says further:

“So preye I God that non myswrite the,
Ne the mysmetere for defaute of tongue.”

The old manuscripts are carefully printed for us; we have only to pronounce correctly and we shall hear the music of the masters.

That this reform of our spelling will be no hindrance to etymological studies need hardly be mentioned, it has been so often explained by our great philologists. We have the records preserved of all the old forms of spelling, and scholars like nothing better than to search them out, and give them to the public, who may find them in their dictionaries. It will however make it harder for foreigners little versed in etymology, to recognize English words akin to their own, or to the other foreign tongues. It is thought that it will be hard to introduce this scheme; that the printers can not use it for want of types, and that no one can read it without study. These objections have force against the sudden use of the whole scheme, but may be

met by its gradual introduction and by temporary expedients. Three lines of movement are needed, one to render the new types familiar to the public, a second to carry out a system of uniform use of all the letters, a third to drop silent letters. Something may be done in each line at once, but the first naturally leads the way. The new letters may be substituted for the old ones which they resemble, when the old ones have the intended sound, without embarrassing any reader; and when the new letters have become familiar, they can be gradually used wherever their sound occurs. Printers who have not the new types, can use the old ones of which they are variations, adding a dot: a· for a, o· for o, u· for u, and the like. Every one of these distinctions, accurately made, is clear gain, however it may be expressed by types.

REFORM ACCORDING TO ENGLISH ANALOGIES.

The other system is to follow the analogies of the present English spelling, to give each of our single letters the value which it has oftenest, and to supplement with those digraphs which now most commonly represent the sounds which would have no single letter to represent them.

Two powerful reasons may be urged for a trial of this method.

1. It can be easily read by every one who can read in the present spelling.

2. It can be printed with common types.

It may be further said, that it is in the line of the regular development of our language. It is the tendency everywhere in language for minorities to conform to majorities. The unusual modes of spelling would naturally, according to this law, give way to the most common mode, and this would ultimately be the only mode of denoting each sound. So that in adopting this system we should only be hastening the natural process by which cosmos comes out of chaos; and this, our scientific men say, is the true office of the reformer.

Many of the objections to this scheme would be removed by regarding digraphs which represent elementary sounds, as single characters, and naming them as such by their elementary sound without making mention of the separate letters. They should be cast as one type. Then the type founders would soon invent shapely abbreviations, which would be good enough signs, and record some English history to boot. In reducing the scheme to practice difficulties arise. The uses of our letters are so various that the conflict of rival claims among the digraphs is hard to decide, and, however it be decided, the aspect of large numbers of words is so completely changed that easy reading is out of the question. Then this kind of spelling is associated in many minds with buffoonery, vulgarity and illiteracy. It excites odium, rid-

icuple and violent opposition. In spite of all this, there are many persons to whom it is more acceptable than any other scheme. It has been carefully labored by Mr. Ellis, Mr. Jones, and others, and the use of it may obviously contribute to genuine reform in the present stage of the movement.

PRACTICAL MEASURES.

No earnest comprehensive effort has yet been made to ascertain and harmonize the views of those interested in this reform. Committees of the English and the American Philological Association would be now in a position to attempt it, and probably the attempt will be made during the coming year. If the assent of a few of the most eminent representatives of scholarship can be combined with that of the leading practical workers, an indefinite number of subscriptions or assent from others can easily be obtained. It would be too much to hope that any complete system can at once be agreed upon: but it seems almost certain that some important particulars may be, since the report of the Committee of the American Philological Association was not only made unanimously and adopted without opposition, but is apparently cordially assented to everywhere, even by those who have been looked to as champions of our present spelling. This report contains the following proposition:

“The ideal of an alphabet is that every sound should have its own unvarying sign and every sign its own unvarying sound.”

“The Roman alphabet is so widely and so firmly established in use among the leading civilized nations that it can not be displaced: in adapting it to improved use for English, the efforts of scholars should be directed toward its use with uniformity and in conformity with other nations.” It can not surely be impossible to take a first step in the course thus distinctly marked out.

AN ASSOCIATION OF REFORMERS.

But even before any agreement on schemes of reform, a national or international association of those interested in the matter may be formed. A nucleus of permanent workers might accomplish much by collecting the names of a large number of members, organizing subordinate societies, urging the reform by lectures, through the press, by private correspondence, and in many other ways.

LEARNED SOCIETIES.

Many learned societies may with propriety aid by passing resolutions in favor of reformed spelling, and by introducing it into their Transactions. The Philological Society of London, the American

Philological Association, National and State Teachers Association, the Association for the Advancement of Science in Great Britain and America, and other similar bodies, may be looked to with hope. Both the Philological Societies have had the matter before them; the American has appointed and continued from year to year a committee representing our great universities and our best scholarship—whose report for the last year has already been mentioned; the London Society allows a certain latitude to its members in the spelling of their papers in their transactions. National and State Teachers Associations have also appointed Committees to investigate and report, and to co-operate with the Philological Association.

GOVERNMENT ACTION.

The Legislatures of our States, of the United States, and of Great Britain may introduce the new spelling into public documents. A considerable number of documents published by the United States contain linguistic material connected with the aborigines, which ought to be printed in uniform phonetic spelling to be easily used by scholars. The legislature of the conservative old State of Connecticut has the honor of leading the way. The following joint resolution passed both their houses without dissent.

“Resolved by this Assembly: That the Governor be, and he hereby is authorized to appoint a Commission, consisting of six competent persons, who shall examine as to the propriety of adopting an amended orthography of the public documents hereafter to be printed, and how far such amended orthography may with propriety be adopted, and report thereupon to the next session of the General Assembly. That such Commission shall receive no compensation for its services. Approved July 20th, 1875.”

The Governor appointed Senator W. W. Fowler, by whom the Resolution was offered, Professor Whitney and Trumbull of Yale College, the Secretary of the Board of Education, Hon. B. G. Northrup, Professor Hart of Trinity College and Van Benschoten of Wesleyan University, a Commission of which any State might be proud. This Commission has been continued by the legislature in the hope that concurrent action may be taken by other States. The two houses of the Pennsylvania legislature were passing a similar joint resolution without dissent, when some one noticed that under the new constitution it must have the form of a bill. This preliminary action has been of great importance in awakening interest and gathering up a certain authority for the movement. The actual use of improved spelling in such documents and transactions would give it authority without kindling popular hostility.

FREEDMEN'S AID AND BIBLE SOCIETIES.

An appeal may be made with much reason to all associations which are formed to support our free institutions and to promote Christianity, such as the freedmen's aid societies, the home missionary and the Bible societies. The freedmen will not learn the present spelling. The missionaries among the pagan population in California and elsewhere cannot use the press to reach them. We print Bibles and other good books in strange dialects in the hope of reaching a few thousand Asiatics or Africans. An English Bible in reformed orthography may well reach millions in a single generation who otherwise would never read it.

PUBLISHERS.

Publishers must be brought to take an interest in the reform. Some will doubtless do so from pure benevolence and love of progress; but they ought also to have money in it. There are writers among us, scholars and popular authors, who may insist on using in their own publications more or less of reformed spelling. A single new letter is worth introducing, or a single reformed word. Many newspapers and periodicals could be easily opened in this way. Several papers are now printed in a reformed alphabet, and they may be encouraged. Merchants and other advertisers may insist on printing their business advertisements and circulars in the same manner. Dictionaries must be made, and other standard works of reference in which publishers will invest. Is it not possible that the publishers of primers and spellers may adopt a uniform statement of our alphabetic sounds, and change the names of the letters to the sounds which they oftenest represent. That would be great gain, worth holding a convention for.

TEACHERS.

Teachers are our best hope. They need the reform most. They understand it best. They must teach it to the generation who are to use it. The way should be made easy for them. Primers, spellers, readers, and all other school-books, and other printed apparatus of the best kind should be furnished in reformed spelling. It may be made a matter of discussion and instruction in their institutes and conventions, and in their printed periodicals. The superintendents will lead the van. Win the schoolroom and the cause is won.

RAPID PROGRESS.

Want of faith and want of concert are the greatest obstacles to rapid progress. Scholars, especially, think how slow changes in language have been, and how little influence the learned class have ex-

erted upon them; they sleep in the fields of Giant Despair. But year by year the power of reason increasez in every form of activity, as year by year the meanz increase of collecting and concentrating the assent of thinking personz. What with our railroadz and telegraphz, and our newspaperz, and our societiez and associationz, with their meetingz and conventionz, it iz not extravagant to say that a wider and more powerful concentration of opinion can now be effected in a single summer than would have been possible in a hundred yearz three centurie ago. Changes of pronunciation, general changez of spoken language, depend in great part on little known cauzez which work upon whole nationz through their physical organization, and which we may well despair of controlling; but orthography iz independent machinery over which the consent of reason haz full control. Several modern languages have had their spelling reformed by the influence of learned academiez, or by government; and surely no language needz reform more than ourz, and no race are more ready reformerz.

R. S. BAKER
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